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THE OPPOSITION IN INDONESIA: INSTITUTIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR CHA--ETC(U)  
1981 W H FREDERICK

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THE OPPOSITION IN INDONESIA:  
INSTITUTIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR CHANGE

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A number of years ago, at a juncture in Indonesian history and Western attempts to understand it that may be as critical as the one we face today, Harry J. Benda proposed that the questions then being asked about Indonesia by even the most perceptive of observers were essentially irrelevant. Whether he was right or not is a matter more easily debated now than at that time, at least in part because Benda's argument moved in the same direction as a swift and fashionable current of academic thinking about post-colonial societies and politics. No matter: the ensuing discussion was not only lively, it almost certainly led to a good deal of scholastic re-thinking and searching that would otherwise not have taken place.

I do not propose to adopt the same historical overview as Benda, which was more or less that the Indonesian river in the early 1960s was demonstrably flowing more, and more powerfully, in its original bed, from which colonialism had so rudely disturbed it. But I do want to call into question our approaches to post-1965 Indonesia, principally from the point of view of the relevance of the kinds of inquiries we have made. I believe

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we need to face up squarely to a general failure to understand the New Order, both in specifics and in broader, conceptual aspects. And the major reason for this failure is that we have persisted in asking wrong-headed questions. The line of investigation followed by the dominant schools of Indonesia-watchers, for example, has concerned itself heavily and in some instances almost exclusively with the weaknesses and failures of the Suharto government from its very inception onward. The overarching question has been, in the simplest phraseology possible, "What is wrong with this regime and when is it going to fall apart?" One of the unsatisfactory results of this approach has been a repetition of the watching and waiting onlookers did during the period 1957-1965, always expecting the bursting of the Sukarnoist state and always being disappointed when that did not occur.....and then being caught by surprise by the timing and nature of the final debacle. In the present case, the watching and waiting is being done both by obvious and long-standing foes of the Suharto government, and by those who give it begrudging or measured support as "the only reasonable hope" or "the best alternative possible at this time" or "the only alternative." The scenarios for the near future that all these groups work out are fundamentally quite similar, differing only in judgements about the speed with which change is either desirable or possible, because they are all predicated on an almost intuitive sense that the New Order is seriously flawed in both obvious and subtle ways, and has very little in the long run to redeem or recommend it.

I believe we should be proceeding differently, starting

more or less anew from an almost entirely opposite notion: that the plain fact of the now not-so-New Order's decade and a half of existence is extraordinary and noteworthy. We should be asking above all how this longevity can be accounted for. Particularly in the face of so many unrealized scenarios in the past few years, we ought to be asking what the present Indonesian leadership has been doing "right" all this time, not--and this must be emphasized--in any moral judgemental or ideological sense, but in terms of the government/administrative apparatus itself, the society in which it must function, and the general intellectual atmosphere. It seems to me that only by understanding in some realistic dimension how the regime has functioned (rather than dysfunctioned) and what its strengths are can we begin, among other things, to point out weaknesses and strains accurately, or make meaningful assessments of the Order's future. Obviously this is not the place to attempt a full-scale application of this notion, but it informs much of the commentary that follows.

#### Consensus and the New Order

The most-noticed but least carefully examined characteristic of the New Order is its drive for consensus. For Western observers, it is fair to say, the rhetoric expended on behalf of consensus, primarily visible as Pancasila exposition or reference, is not only overwhelming in terms of quantity but virtually devoid of meaning. Especially for those who are acquainted with the late Sukarno period, the New Order efforts at ideologizing appear to be less defensible and in the long run less sig-

nificant than the seemingly more genuinely syncretic formulations of that earlier time. The remarkable involvement of Ruslan Abdulgani in both ideologizing efforts has served to increase suspicions about the emptiness of the exercise, and about both intent and content of New Order understanding of Pancasila-ism. (Abdulgani has played an increasingly weaker role in the so-called P4 movement since late 1979.) The worst judgment has been that current Pancasila-ism is a transparent justification, a cruel, tawdry, and pseudo-intellectual smokescreen used by the power elite to mask their real outlook on the world and give them a thin skin of legitimacy. At best, Pancasilaism is seen from the outside as being piece of cultural business, essentially of no consequence in the order of things and certainly possessing no genuine powers of its own.

These evaluations are in large part mistaken. Writers have solemnly recorded the erosion of support for Suharto from the alliance that originally supported it. Yet now, a decade later, despite the apparent dissipation of this "consensus," we do not find the regime in a fundamentally weaker circumstance or any less likely to continue in power. Nor is the bottom-line support it enjoys demonstrably weaker. This may not be a direct result of a successful marketing of Pancasila as a philosophy of state, but it is evidence, I think, that a consensus exists which is not easily analyzable in larger terms and that it has some connection with a commonly perceived social faith. It may well be that Pancasila is in fact a genuine and meaningful expression of such a social faith, and that it, along with other manifestations of the same ideas, answers very real needs of

Indonesian society as a whole. At very least, unless we are prepared to argue--quite unreasonably, I think--that the New Order has been held together exclusively or predominantly by the exercise of force and manipulative policies, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that, after all, the Suharto government has been successful in creating or nurturing a particular species of consensus that serves it well and that is very little in danger of dissolving to leave the regime vulnerable to replacement.

How might this have taken place ? There are a number of possible answers. First and perhaps foremost, the specter of polarization along the lines of the 1965-66 experience may have been a great deal more chilling than surface reactions of Indonesians have generally indicated, and, more important, may have sunk far more thoroughly and realistically into the Indonesian consciousness<sup>ness</sup> than, for example, Clifford Geertz once thought was the case. Fear of a repetition of such conflict may provide a real, if imprecisely defined, limit to disaffection for a wide range of groups whose ideas differ in other respects. Whatever the rhetoric has been over the past decade, uncompromising positions are not in vogue in contemporary Indonesia, and not merely because the government wishes it so. There is a widespread "street wisdom" (I hesitate to use "cynicism" here, though it exists, because it tends to give the impression that a relatively deep-running alienation goes with it) about political posturing in Indonesia today, whether by government representatives, students, political parties, or the military leadership, that dis-

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trusts simplistic, single-stranded outlooks. The preference seems to be for perspectives that mix and match ideas and suggest a working together of viewpoints. It is difficult to tell if fear of polarization is the principal impetus here, but it is forthrightly alluded to with sufficient frequency that we can conclude it is a significant factor.

Second, it seems to me worth considering that, beyond the more negative limitations just mentioned, there is a widespread positive response to a broad and largely abstract notion of communal identity and unity. One finds in the sea of publications flowing out of New Order Indonesia a vast and largely uncharted region of what I suggest we call manunggal literature: writings that appear to have as their main purpose the gathering of loose intellectual threads, conflicting ideas or opinions, anomalies and dichotomies, and a great deal more into a single, senseful framework; literature that is perhaps more concerned about creating an intellectual community in which all can share, than a social or a political unity. This is not, it cannot be stressed too strongly, merely a Pancasila literature, though there is plenty of that, or simply the product of government presses. It is found in social science writing of many kinds, some of it by serious and reputable academics; in a whole range of materials coming out of one or another branch of the military establishment or the bureaucracy, but not as "official" literature entirely; and in innumerable writings, often in periodicals and newspapers, by both critics and defenders of the government who try to express ideas about the existence of and need for a sense of commonality. It seems to me very likely that the notion

of a wawasan nasional--a "national insight," to translate rather too literally--is something taken seriously by many serious people who do not understand why discussion of such a thing, much less the not infrequent implication that when sufficiently matured a wawasan nasional might provide a suitable underpinning for a genuinely Indonesian social science, is greeted with disbelief by most Western readers. To dismiss this drive for a thoroughly meshed intellectual base (which goes beyond, incidentally, a syncretized national identity) as inconsequential or incapable of moving important segments of Indonesian society is a grave error. But we are almost totally without current research in these matters.

Third, it is possible that one of the basic social formulations of the New Order--at its simplest, as Suharto bluntly put it in 1966, that "the Indonesian people are not familiar with [social] classes and do not have them"--is much nearer the socio-political truth than virtually all Westerners writers have been comfortable accepting. At very least, we must grapple with the failure of analysis of events of the 1960s, including 1965-66, along class lines, and the subsequent empty waiting for real and radicalized classes and class conflict to emerge in the 1970s as a result of accelerated modernization under an authoritarian regime. Is it possible that, in fact, horizontal (class or class-like) divisions are not and never have been a serious threat, and that vertical organization of society is strong enough in Indonesia today to ease consensus-seeking significantly by presenting, at the top of society, a kind of naturally bunched-together elite whose tendency is to act similarly



and to control the social "pillars" atop which they sit in similar fashion as well ? Could it be that the Suharto government's perception of Indonesian society is remarkably accurate, and that its strategy for creating stability as well as exercising leadership, therefore, on the mark ? This would be an especially bitter pill for those Western critics who have made much of the New Order establishment's separation from, and even hostility to, the masses.

Fourth, it seems to me probable that we have something more substantial to examine here than a highly generalized, and perhaps merely circumstantial or temporary coincidence of social understandings. The general pattern of New Order thinking about society and the ways in which it properly functions bear a striking resemblance to much of the written evidence of social self-examination associated with the pre-war pergerakan, or independence movement, and the new priyayi groups who led it. What we see today is more sharply focused and, frequently with arrays of graphs and other illustrative material, given the look of ilmu sosial or, loosely, social science, but the assumptions are basically the same: that society is naturally divided between leaders and followers, that the divisions are complementary rather than oppositional, and that leaders, in fulfilling their model role, prevent conflict and disarray from jarring the social community at large at the same time as they give followers access to and a steady vision of an appropriately constituted, civilized, stable community. The masses, in other words, are to be served at the same time as guided and guarded from foolhardiness, whether of their own making or coming from out-

side; indeed, guiding and guarding are ultimately indistinguishable acts. (The military, of course, was missing from the consideration of pre-war new priyayi, but the revolution and certainly the New Order shows us reasonably clearly that both military and civilian leaders are direct intellectual descendants of this new priyayi thinking.) Could it be that the New Order represents, more than anything else, the triumph of this perspective on society in the hands (and minds) of a new priyayi that was relatively small in the mid-1920s, larger in the 1930s and 1940s, burgeoning during the revolution and early 1950s, and positively exploding after 1965 ? And could it also be that the outlook we have been discussing is, in the last analysis, the one with the lowest common denominator in Indonesian society as it is presently constituted, understandable and generally acceptable very broadly ?

Finally, it may be that the New Order is not as overbearingly monolithic as is commonly supposed outside Indonesia and in very highly selected Indonesian circles. Surely the control which the military/bureaucratic establishment has been able to or willing to extend over Indonesian society falls far short of being totalitarian, and there is anything but a neatly homogeneous bureaucratic state in place. What is more--and this is yet another subject about which we are piteously ill-informed--it would appear that there has been considerable social change, measured by both income and ideas, during the past ten or fifteen years. Whether all of the changes have taken place with the intention or at least approval of the Suharto government is

another matter. The bulk of Western opinion seems to be that they have not, and that given the opportunity the regime would move rapidly to create what it has always wanted, a state in which the only change is that generated by the state apparatus, a pure form of economic development (à la capitalism) without disequilibrium.

I am not so confident that this is the case. The New Order began with a commitment not to individual rights in absolute terms, but to a socio-political order in which the individual was subject to fewer constraints or pressures (particularly those of a political or ideological nature) and the public tolerance for differences of opinion was greater than under Guided Democracy. On the whole, the regime has retained this characteristic. And on the whole, too, the result has been an intellectual vitality that was entirely lacking between 1959 and 1966, despite the existence of limitations which by many standards are unacceptably restrictive. The reason is almost certainly not simply that the government has been incapable physically or technically to carry out its deepest wishes, but that it is itself operating under certain constraints and that, more positively, the vision of "dynamic stability" genuinely appreciates dynamism born of intellectual exchange and cultural challenge, as long as it takes place within certain recognised limits.

All of these possibilities--and I want to stress that they should be viewed as such until a great deal of further study can take place--may have contributed in different ways and to different degrees to a generalized consensus, a kind of

common-denominator acceptance of the shape and larger goals of the New Order. Within this special sort of consensus, the most pressing questions may be how long the "transitional phase" in and on which it was assembled can be expected to continue, and whether the consensus itself requires some manner of refurbishing. If this is so, the parameters of "opposition"--a word we perhaps should not be using at all--could be rather limited indeed without creating serious stress on the system as a whole. And in this circumstance it seems fairly obvious that the questions we should be asking will have more to do with issues than opposition, reforms rather than alternatives (much less institutional alternatives), and details of scenarios of continuity rather than of change.

With all of this in mind, we can turn to a series of specific topics.

### Islam

There is a general perception, inside Indonesia and out, that Islam and Islamic sensitivities have played a major part in the contemporary drama and are now at the very center of the political drama, in which the climax is to be, once more, the general elections. There is a strong tendency to view the situation in terms of a deep-rooted and perhaps insoluble conflict between secularism and religion in Indonesia, a quarrel which if carried far enough or allowed to proceed unchecked might well destroy the existing government, for better or worse. Virtually all commentators, however, pull back sharply from predicting a real confrontation between State and Islam, one involving revolu-

tion or rebellion. The reasons advanced have to do with the nature of Indonesian Islam as opposed, say, to Iranian: there are no ayatullahs, for example; there is a heavily syncretic base; and there are long-standing differences among Moslems. None of these explanations, in my view, is adequate. They continue to look at Indonesian Islamic institutions and ideas either monolithically (like the New Order itself) or in relative isolation from many contemporary realities.

What are those realities? One is that the "secularism without secularization" sought by Nurcholish Madjid more than a decade ago has in fact taken root and spread, at least in part because Islam has benefitted by and followed the leadership of the New Order. There has been a virtual revolution in pesantren education, for example, and a vastly increased stream of serious Moslems entering into what is now much less clearly the secular sector in public life (publishing is a good example). Islamic opinion circulates more freely and broadly than 15 years ago, and in some ways it might even be argued that contemporary Indonesia is more heavily influenced and evenly covered by Islamic thinking of many kinds than was Sukarno's Indonesia. This is the case not merely because the New Order has excited the Moslem community to oppose it, but because the Order offered much to Moslems that they have been quick and flexible enough to take advantage of.

It seems to me to be true as well that what everyone has pointed to as a species of Islamic revival gathering force over the past five years or so is far more complex a phenomenon than generally believed. Growing interest in Islam is not, as

far as I can see, a mass response, and certainly is not a mass response to the crushing weight of personally experienced poverty or oppression. It is instead a phenomenon of the middle and upper classes, and largely of cities and towns. These folk have a revived interest in Islam because it offers comfort and a spiritual anchor in a time of rapid social and cultural change; because it offers some way of dealing with the perceptibly widening gap between those who have benefitted economically from the New Order (with few exceptions, themselves) and those (others such as the rural poor and urban underclass) who have not; and because Islam offers a clearly-stated moral position and an alternative system of legitimacy to that of the state, which is still fuzzy and often suspect. These "revived" Moslems, including entertainers, military men, and intellectuals, do not practice Islamic politics of a single-minded sort, and they are not fundamentally in disagreement with Pancasila ideals, though they have misgivings about the morality of the New Order as it presently exists and as it presently seems to affect Indonesian society.

To put one of these last points a little differently but perhaps more forcefully, Islam has attracted the interest of a range of groups and individuals lately because it appears to fulfill more satisfactorily than any other line of thought the strong populist needs of a burgeoning middle class. The particular kind of populism I have in mind here is not directly "participatory" and is characterized by a distinctly patrimonial cast; it seeks to involve the masses in the affairs and social vision of the state not by identifying and making room for class

(horizontally arranged) interests but by strengthening and expanding what are basically patrimonial (vertically arranged) ties. The moral and emotional fuel of this kind of thinking is a sympathy for and special sort of distant awareness of the masses and their role in the social whole; the desire to speak for and uplift the masses is pronounced, as is the tendency, stronger at some times than others, to engage in egalitarian rhetoric and display. This is precisely the populism of the new priyayi in the 1930s and even before. In its current form, much influenced by the style of the New Order, which has generally been managerial and unemotional, this populism seems in the eyes of many Indonesians to be best expressed and charged through Islam. There is a widespread belief, even among government officials highly critical of Moslem activities, that somehow Islam brings people "closer to the masses" than other ways of thinking, that students in Islamic universities are more representative of the general populace than others, and that Moslem leaders hold a key to building a socially and perhaps even economically more evenhanded modernization. The same notions underlie an enormously popular brand of popular music known as dangdut, which in turn has created a distinctly Islamic-populist style of written, spoken, and acted commentary on the moral state of society, a style which seems to speak eloquently in moral and emotional terms to people at all levels.

None of this, of course, translates into political unity, and even less into a set of carefully conceived set of alternatives for the state or the masses. I see nothing in current Islamic writings about the state and Moslems' relation to it that

outlines a genuinely different political system than exists at the present time. Even when it is proposed that the sovereignty of the state be understood in terms of popular sovereignty/sovereignty of God, there is no indication of how this might be accomplished structurally (the implication is that the present structure would do), or that the existing concept of the state, law and tolerance included, ought to be abandoned. Indeed a good many writers insist that the conceptualization itself is correct, and complain only that reality does not match up to it and cannot do so if the state remains determinedly secular. Even less is there a visible Moslem alternative to development policy. We hear a great outcry about foreign investment, projects that work against the best interests of the "little people" and the environment (occasionally), but the distinct impression I get is that this is a response pattern based on a thin sort of populist morality. In a few Central Javanese kabupaten where Moslem political figures have acquired control of local councils, decisions on development matters, particularly those concerning land, health, and education, have apparently been considerably less enlightened than those of the government-driven Golkar. Whether pesantren-generated ideas of pemuda cadres serving in village development projects operate under substantially different principles than those supported by various government and university agencies remains to be seen. A number of foreign observers, particularly Australians, seem to think that a different species of involvement with the masses is being developed in this way, but I am far from convinced.

In Indonesian political life Islam will almost surely



continue to be heard from, and Moslem thinkers and leaders will continue to play a useful and frequently vigorous role. But that role will consist of supplying emotional and moral correctives to the existing arrangement rather than anything else. The reason is that the majority of Indonesians, and thus most Moslems, are very far along the road to accepting as a matter of course the separation of church and state. Their principal concern with the state is whether it functions properly and within a generally acceptable morality. They prefer to vote on essentially secular issues, when all is said and done, and Islam is their vehicle for making moral statements or exerting moral pressures of a different sort. This tendency seems to be growing stronger with the recent attention to "fanatic" Moslem elements. Undoubtedly exclusivist-activist Moslems will continue to discover that they cannot count on the 90% voting support they have always believed is their due, and will continue to believe that the Suharto government is to blame for their difficulties. But they will be wrong.

#### Political parties and students

The dawn of the New Order was never intended to coincide with the dawn of a return to party politics. The charges levelled at the political parties in the years immediately preceding Guided Democracy were still strong ten years later, and they remain surprisingly strong today. There is still a genuine fear, which as far as I can see is reasonably widely shared, that party politics let loose would polarize society and have no saving graces such as constructive public debate of issues

or viable development alternatives. None of the political parties, including the government non-party, Golkar, has a genuine constituency based on clearly defined interests and issues. Golkar probably has some "roots" the other parties do not in the form of a patron-client column and access to mobility of sorts. But on the whole the parties are floating quite as much as the New Order masses.

The desire to change the situation seems to be growing among some segments of the political elite, for a variety of reasons. Some military leaders wish to extricate the armed forces from political affairs largely or altogether, leaving Golkar to fend for itself. Some Golkar figures agree, and want to see their group have an opportunity at putting together a constituency without "outside" help. Moslems want access to rural Indonesia because they are certain they can quicken strong support there and link it up with that achieved in the past few years in urban areas. And the PDI seems to believe that it could, in direct contact with the masses once more, rejuvenate itself and its stand. All of these ideas have to do with contacting and representing the masses, and with gaining legitimacy in society from these roots. It was this thrust that lay behind the petition of February 1980 regarding the proposed elections law.

In the events which followed--the abstention of Nahdatul Ulama members from the electoral law vote of March 2, the bitter and aggressive speeches of the president on March 27 and April 16, the May 5 "Petition of Fifty," and the subsequent note signed by 19 members of parliament asking Suharto if he didn't agree at least that significant issues had been raised--it be-

came clear how thoroughly the regime sees the linking of party opposition and direct mass mobilization efforts as threatening to the New Order, root and branch. Suharto concluded in his state address on August 17 that political stability is still lacking in Indonesia, and that this circumstance requires the utmost caution. He did not, however, bar the door for a dialogue--circumspect, to be sure--on national issues, and later more specifically suggested that such a dialogue take place.

It is exactly in such an issue-oriented dialogue that the political parties are likely to show up badly, and there is some sign that they are tactfully trying to avoid becoming entangled in one. Even the strongest supporters of the ideals of party government have been forced to admit, though they generally do so privately, that the possibility of a dialogue on issues--again within bounds--has been possible in the existing press and through other media, but that the political parties have failed to make anything of the opportunity; it seems likely that they could not use a new chance to much advantage, either. The reason is very simple: party politics has not yet turned with any thoughtfulness to the task of working out alternatives to cornerstone government policies, or to the larger New Order system. There is a paucity of systematic investigation of alternatives, which remain shallow hopes or possibilities rather than plans or platforms. When the parties complain that their weakness has been brought about by their forcible separation from the masses they are simply indicating that no different bases for political organization and activity have been considered by the leadership and that they are living attitudinally in the past.

Neither charisma nor dusted-off Marhaenism is of much use these days, and the PDI, even more than the PPP, must rely, in the absence of any intellectually consequential approaches, on enumerating excesses of the regime and hoping to fashion from the remnants of an outdated populist rhetoric something of a reformist position for itself.

Such weakness on the part of the political parties leaves the government in a strong position to have its will be done, but there is a certain potential for embarrassment here, as Suharto undoubtedly realizes. The position of the regime in relation to the parties is too strong, almost certainly stronger than New Order statagists had in mind. There are some thoughtful individuals, and they have grown in number in recent years, who believe that the present intellectual bankruptcy of the parties constitutes a serious threat to the New Order (which they support.) But how to replace or vitalize them without either opening Pandora's box or opting for a thorough restructuring, itself a potential source of restlessness? And is there any reason to think that these efforts would solve the problem? With these dilemmas in mind, Suharto seems to be more interested in fostering discussion of issues out in the open, and to tolerate greater differences of opinion on many issues. (There has, for example, been repeated expression of the notion that "differences of opinion are natural" and so on.) But whether all of this will translate into a national dialogue of any sort before the elections next year remains to be seen.

In the meantime, tensions will certainly rise, but they will be tensions born of rather simple frustration or low-level

outrage rather than the thwarting of deep-seated convictions and well thought-out alternatives, or, certainly, thorough alienation. The government is probably correct in believing that the period of political transition cannot be considered over, and there is some reason to think that it is not to blame for this circumstance. Contrary to what many observers seem to believe, I have a suspicion that Order leaders see they have a genuine interest in ending the transition, but they are unwilling to take risks in doing so. The public does not seem to be single-minded on the issue, which in fact would make a controversial item in a national dialogue.

There has been little consequential literature on Indonesian student movements and ideas in the 1970s, but general Western opinion has been that they are to be taken seriously. Exactly how or why is, to my way of thinking at least, unclear. The student trials of 1979, and the publications (mostly of defense orations on the Indonesia Accuses ! model Sukarno laid down in 1930) stemming from them have convinced some that this breed or generation of students is different from previous ones, having the discipline, wisdom, and clarified goals necessary to affect a genuine change.

I am perfectly willing to accept that student actions in opposition to the government have had considerable effect on the thinking of the political elite and much of the upper middle class as well. From what I could see in Yogyakarta in 1978, furthermore, it is probably true that news of confrontations on campus were talked about widely throughout the urban community and evoked some sympathy for students from residents of kampung

of widely varied economic and social status. On the other hand, it is also the case, if my casual observations are correct, that taken together the public feeling about student activism is by no means unanimously positive. Students say repeatedly that they could garner greater support if only the public knew the truth about things, but I am not at all sure they aren't misreading the situation.

The documents prepared by the arrested students leaders make important reading for anyone watching Indonesia today, but I cannot agree with those, inside Indonesia and out, who believe that these publications represent anything radically new in student thinking, or that they are, in fact, realistic appraisals of the New Order....especially in the historical context that many student writing speak so weightily about. The writings have a self-centered, self-righteous quality that goes well beyond what we might expect even of a defense speech genre, and they are frequently deliberately direct and irritating in ways that many Indonesian readers--even fellow students--find amusing but cannot fully account for or accept. On the whole, the documents do not reveal that students envision a role for themselves that is fundamentally different from that of a corrective force ("social control") on present day society. The issues that students speak most frequently about are inconsistency in matters of law and public exercise of power; application of totalitarian and terroristic tactics to control society; and adoption of development policies against the interests of the masses and, infact, directed at the continued subjugation of the lower segments of society. But the general vision is one not of a struc-

turally inadequate Order for which there is a clear remedy; it is of a state that has lost its way, a state turned conspiratorial in an effort to disguise the fact that things are out of control and semrawut, bungled and awry. The blame is laid at the feet of a lazy and corrupt elite. There is an insistent implication, quite impossible to ignore, that the real problem is the people who are running the system rather than the system itself.

Two things must be said about this student activist vision. First, it offers nothing new in the way of structural or institutional alternatives, and does not suggest how the pronounced difficulties it underscores might be overcome. (An exception here: direct elections or direct representation of the people is generally noted as a change that would solve many problems, but it is not clear how. At any rate, this too represents, as far as I can tell, merely a reform of the existing structure.) One reason is that little if any original thinking has been done with available data about the state of the Indonesian state. Not only do these writings get their data virtually entirely from the press (which they characterize as severely muzzled), but the theoretic framework for this information seems largely borrowed from foreign authors. Second, I see no indication whatsoever that the populist drive of the students is any different from that already abroad elsewhere in Indonesian society. It is the populism I have already described, and the students' own insistence on the "social control" definition of their activities shows more clearly than they realize how we must understand what they are doing. They

are criticizing the New Order elite but are at the same time adopting an identical perspective on the masses. In this basically patrimonial and paternalistic style of populist thinking, social control indeed plays an integral part.

Students will not bring about political change in the near future, at least not in any direct sense. Student activism shares all of the problems of the political parties, and has not even their precarious position in the public political order. The normalisasi kampus, which has in fact not been as roundly unpopular in the public eye as students would like their audience to believe, will succeed and youth political activities will be merged (off campus) with those of parties. A problem of intellectual bankruptcy remains, as does the need for a truly different vision of political life if something more than reformism is intended.

#### Other sources of "opposition"

In recent years a host of institutes and study groups has arisen that bear scrutiny in any discussion of opposition and alternatives to change. In some ways these institutions are the most appealing source of ideas. They do, indeed, seem to be involved in discussion, debate, study, and the like, and also appear to be attempting to work out genuine alternatives to current policies of the government. There is a wide range of interest in and appreciation for the political applications and implications of what they do. Whether or not the very existence of these institutions represents a widespread disaffection from the New Order and its foundations, however, is another



matter altogether.

In my estimation, the lembagas and yayasans that are serious about their study and discussion tasks comprise the genuinely "loyal opposition" in contemporary Indonesia, and on the whole are accepted as such by the government. They all seek to provide forums--some wide such as that devised by LP3ES via the serial Prisma and the LP3ES book publishing enterprise, and some much more narrow such as the Fosko Purna Yudha group--for new and challenging ideas. In a few cases a small and usually temporary group has been initiated to address a particular problem, like the Panitia Lima, which brought together several "old hands" including Mohammed Hatta to correct current wisdoms about Pancasila's history and incidentally gripe about many aspects of the New Order, including income taxes. And there is also the example of a much larger assembly, the Group of 50, but I doubt if it can rightly be considered under this rubric, given its transitoriness and its approach. I think that the sponsors and members of these organizations also consider themselves to be something akin to a loyal opposition, that is an Indonesian translation of such a force, and not in any way seeking to revamp the principal structure of the regime.

At the same time, it seems clear that while these organizations share the general outlook of the New Order and are not inclined to pretend that they don't, they are also in touch with the most salient characteristic of the New Order society: change, rapid change in more complex and more interesting patterns than is easy for many Indonesians and foreigners to accept. LP3ES surely has been an the vanguard of both recognising

and encouraging intellectual flexibility and change, and describing social change in all its manifestations, past and present. The weekly magazine TEMPO, though not outwardly the sort of lembaga we are discussing, has in reality fulfilled a very similar function, even with respect to creating a group of intellectuals continually turning over current issues and staying in touch with contemporary realities....within a context of New Order loyalty.

Some of these groups are, it must be pointed out, considerably closer to the government than others. While the CSIS, only partially a think-tank lembaga of the kind we are discussing here, has failed to produce anything of genuine significance, newer groups, still close to the government and inclined to see problems not even in terms of reform but of perfecting the approach already laid out, also have begun to produce materials of real interest. (Unfortunately, this literature has thus far been ignored by outsiders precisely because it does not voice an opposing or alternative position. But the kinds of notions that are coming out of these groups may well be more significant as far as informing us about current elite thinking than any of the channels we habitually listen to.) One active group that perhaps answers this description is LEPPENAS.

One of the most interesting things about these organizations, close to the government or not, and either highly or moderately intellectual, is that they seem in tune with the New Order's cultural setting, diverse and changing as it is, in a way that others do not. This includes student activists, who frequently profess finding themselves disturbed by surfeits of

both Western rock music and dangdut. But the vigorous young thinkers and polemicists (which is the right thing to call some of them) seem to be at home with the variety and the change, indeed thrive on it. They don't find it jarring and they don't suffer identity crises in the movies or in their reading and listening to music. It is difficult to know what to make of this exactly, but my intuition tells me it is a healthy sign.

Here again, however, if we look for opposition or, especially, institutional alternatives of the kind we might expect in our own political system, we will be disappointed. The best sources of new and often challenging ideas are coming from within the broad consensus, though the newest elements of it, and there seems to me to be no sign that this will change in the immediate future.

### Conclusion

On balance the New Order probably needs to be judged in rather better health than supposed, repugnant as that may be to those who find certain aspects of it forbidding and morally objectionable. That health, furthermore, seems to me to be based on a curious phenomenon for a military/bureaucratic state, and that is a consensus which exhibits breadth and flexibility, and yet is at the same time structured along patrimonial-populist lines. Does it--will it--all work? At present it looks as if the best answer is "yes," as long as we don't make the mistake of judging the outcome solely on our own terms. There is even, it seems to me, rather ample room for Western opinion influencing this particular Order, given its nature internally and its

sensitivity to its world reputation as a civilized, modern, and respectable state in the family of nations. Human rights (though not precisely as they are understood in the United States) and basic needs economic development planning (though not entirely as Western formulations would have it) are strains of thinking that have already attracted a great deal of interest and are part of public discussion. But the way in which these and other subjects are promoted by outsiders will have to follow the contours of the Order and its underlying consensus, not because the government requires it but because that is what is likely to work most effectively.

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